

University of Massachusetts- Boston
Women's Studies
WOST 350: Beyond Heterosexuality
Fall 2002

Instructor: Chris Bobel, Ph.D.

Office: W-5-009

Phone: 617.287.6781 (with private voice mail)

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 12-1 pm and by appointment.

Email: chris.bobel@umb.edu

Course Description:

This is an interdisciplinary approach to lesbian, bisexual and selected aspects of transgender studies. Together and using text, video and discussion, we will explore problems of theorizing difference and identities,lesbitrans histories, homophobia, heterosexism, coming out, relationships, families and communities. While this course draws on scholarly material as the basis for our shared understandings, it will also tap the personal, the popular and the political to inform the academic.

3 Kinds of **Required** Reading:

□ at University Bookstore (or the bookstore of your choice):

1. Nanda, Serena (1999). *Gender Diversity: Crosscultural Variations*
2. Ingraham, Chris (1999). *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*
3. Bornstein, Kate (1994). *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*
4. Rupp, Leila (2002). *A Desired Past: A Short History of Same-Sex Love in America.*
5. Weston, Kath(1991). *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship.*

(Nanda and Weston are also available at Healey Library Reserve for your convenience).

- VIRTUAL RESERVE accessed via the Healey Library website. We'll talk more about this.
- Special Issue of International Journal of Transgenderism, VOLUME 4, NO. 3 (available online at www.symposion.dcom/ijt/index.itm). Scroll down to Volume 4. Full text of articles available to download and print or simply read online.

Assignments:

4 varied assignments will serve as the basis of your course evaluation. ALWAYS, if an assignment is unclear or giving you difficulty, SEE ME. Don't suffer alone.

Assignments are due AT THE START OF CLASS ON DUE DATE STATED.

Deadlines are firm. All assignments must be typed, double-spaced and paginated. I will accept drafts and rewrites on a limited basis. See below for details.

□ **List of Violated Assumptions.** Value: 15% Due: December 13 (last class)

As the name suggests, this assignment requires you keep a running list of the assumptions you held prior to the start of class that were somehow challenged at some point during the term. Format is flexible. Minimally, 1) state the assumption you held 2) explain your best guess of the source of that assumption 3) describe how and when it was violated (e.g., when I read X, when a classmate told her story of Y, when we had that class discussion about Z (include the DATE) 4) and answer this question: Now what? What will you do differently now that you have this new understanding?

No drafts or rewrites, but I will take a look at an entry if you are concerned if you've got the right idea.

□ **Book Review.** Value: 20%. Due: Depends on the book you choose.

White Weddings: 9/23

A Desired Past: 10/4

Gender Diversity 10/11

Gender Outlaw 10/23

Families We Choose 12/2

Select one of the above assigned texts and write a 3-5 page book review which 1) briefly summarizes key points made in the book including important debates, tensions, and themes relevant to the treated topic. 2) Evaluate the book's strengths and weaknesses. What was especially illuminating? What did the author do well? Not so well? Explore what was omitted that you believe should have been included. 3) Discuss the book's usefulness as a text in this course.

Drafts accepted up to 1 week in advance of due date. No exceptions. Rewrites possible on a case by case basis.

- **Take Home Exam.** Value: 40% Distributed December 11. Due: December 18 by NOON.

This will be a comprehensive exam allowing you to choose from a variety of short essay questions. Comprehension and application of key terms, concepts and debates within the field of queer studies will be assessed.

No drafts. No rewrites.

- **Personal Reflection Essay** Value: 25%. Due: November 22.

Spend some time reflecting on who you are as a person related to gender, race age, ethnicity, religion/spirituality, class and disability and especially sexual orientation. Then, write a paper that addresses the following areas:

- 1) Have you ever felt different because of any of the above characteristics? If so, when did you notice the difference? If you haven't felt different, what has it felt like to "fit in."?
- 2) Discuss how that or those characteristic/s influence your overall identity. How important is that/those characteristic/s to who you are?
- 3) Describe how you "come out" about that/those characteristic/s? Is it/are they obvious? Can you hide it/them? Do you hide it/them? How do you make decisions about how much you tell others?
- 4) Give one or two examples of incidents in which you feel you were treated unfairly because of any of these characteristics. If you can't think of any examples for yourself, list examples of how someone you know was treated unfairly because of a characteristic.

You are not expected to disclose information of a highly personal nature that would cause you unusual discomfort. You decide how much to disclose. Your grade is not based on how much you disclose but on how much personal awareness and insight you demonstrate about what you do choose to share. Your papers will be kept confidential.

Drafts Accepted on or before November 15. Rewrites accepted on a case by case basis.

Attendance:

Because this course is discussion-intensive, your ON TIME attendance and participation is essential. Students will be expected to attend each class and keep up with the weekly reading assignments so they've got something learned to say. I recognize that a number of factors make it difficult for students to speak up in class. But, for most of us, removing common obstacles makes a big difference. And we are all familiar with common obstacles to productive classroom dialogue: 1) coming to class unprepared and 2) fear of sounding stupid. But, both obstacles are avoidable: the former if each student keeps up with the reading, the latter if we collectively agree to a few ground rules for democratic discussion.

The rules are as follows:

- 1) no attacks based on individual or group characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, age or English language skills
- 2) no esoteric terms or reference to materials unless they are known to all (or the speaker is equipped to define/explain their relevance).

KEEP IN MIND: If you come to class and experience the exercises, speakers, and videos, and express yourself in the classroom, you will write better papers and you will get more out of class.

Disability Accommodations:

Section 504 and the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 offer guidelines for curriculum modifications and adaptations for students with documented disabilities. Students may obtain adaptation recommendations from the Lillian Semper Ross Center, McCormack, floor 1, room 401, ph: 617.287.7430. If you have a disability and require appropriate accommodation, please notify me by February 4 (the end of add/drop) and seek assistance from the Lillian Semper Ross Center.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

Below is the University Policy on Academic Standards and Cheating from UMB Undergraduate University Catalog. For further details, refer to the section on plagiarism.

"The first obligation of students is to pursue conscientiously the academic objective which they have determined for themselves. Students are expected to conform to all regulations of the University, of the College in which they are

enrolled, and of the classes in which they are registered. It is further expected that all examinations, texts, written papers or other assignments completed as a part of academic programs are the product of the student's own work and effort.

This means that students may not solicit or use unauthorized material or assistance for their own benefit and may not offer or give such assistance to another student. Every written report or similar class assignment must indicate fully the sources from which the information used is obtained, and any verbatim quotations or paraphrases must be clearly indicated as such and properly credited to the source from which they were extracted or adapted."

Tentative Course Schedule

Orienting Queer Studies

September 4	Course Overview and Introductions
September 6	VIRTUAL RESERVE: Clemens pc. "A Study of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Students..." and MA H.S. Student Survey Results
September 9	VIRTUAL RESERVE: Radical Teacher: FORUM: "On the Political Implications of Using the Term 'Queer'..."

ADD DROP DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 10!!!!!!

Socially Constructing Heterosexuality

September 11	VIRTUAL RESERVE: Rich "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"
September 13	VIRTUAL RESERVE: Pharr: Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism
September 16	White Weddings, Ch. 1 and 2
September 18	White Weddings, Ch. 3 and 4
September 20	Chapter 5 and Possible Film Screening

Beyond Binaries: Exploring Bisexuality

September 23 VIRTUAL RESERVE: Eliason piece, Garber pc.

September 25 VIRTUAL RESERVE: Rust piece

Historicizing Same Sex Love

September 25 A Desired Past, Preface-Ch. 2

September 27 **CLASS CANCELLED. But you still must read: A Desired Past: Preface- Ch. 2**

September 30 A Desired Past, Ch. 3-5

October 2 A Desired Past, Ch. 6-7

October 4 Film Screening: *Out of the Past*

Diversifying Queer in a Global Context

October 7 Gender Diversity, Chs. 1-4

October 9 Gender Diversity, Chs. 5-7

October 11 *Film: Juggling Gender*

Personalizing Gender Change

October 14 COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY---NO CLASS

October 16 Gender Outlaw, Parts 1-3

October 18 Gender Outlaw, Parts 4-5

October 21 Gender Outlaw, Parts 6-7 and Afterword

October 23 VIRTUAL RESERVE: Sojourner's "The Trans Issue" and NYT pc "About a Boy Who Isn't" (Denziet-Lewis)

- October 25 Special Issue of International Journal of Transgenderism, VOLUME 4, NO. 3 (available online at www.symposion.dcom/ijt/index.itm (read Preface, Intro, Bullough, & Kessler and McKenna)
- October 28 Finish IJT special issue (Read Fausto-Sterling, McCloskey, and Gilbert)
- October 30 TBA. Stay Tuned.

Understanding Intersexuality

- November 1 *FILM SCREEING: HERMAPHRODITES SPEAK*
NOTE Course Withdrawal and Conversion to Pass/Fail Deadline is NOVEMBER 7.**
If you have questions about your progress in class, see me BEFORE it is too late. Please...don't just disappear!
- November 4 VIRTUAL RESERVE:"Introduction to Intersex Activism"
- November 6 : VIRTUAL RESERVE: 2 Dreger articles
- November 8: VIRTUAL RESERVE:"Fausto Sterling pc, "Making the Cut" and Point/Counterpoint from "Physicians Weekly"
- November 11: VETERAN's DAY HOLIDAY—NO CLASS

Redefining the Family

- November 13 VIRTUAL RESERVE: Why Marry? The Debate on the Left" (Sullivan)
 Guest Speaker: Tammy MacLean
- November 15 Guest Speaker: Shoshanna Ehrlich
- November 18 Families We Choose, Preface and Ch. 1
- November 20 Families We Choose, Ch. 2-3

November 22	Families We Choose, Ch.4-5
November 25	Families We Choose, Ch.6-7
November 27	Families We Choose, Ch. 8
November 29	Thanksgiving Holiday-NO CLASS
December 2	<i>Film Screening: Florence and Robin</i>
December 4	Discuss Film
December 9	Catch Up Day (you never know)
December 11	Course Evaluations/Take Home Exam Distributed & Discussed
December 13	Last Class: Let's Celebrate!

